

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 are pending in the present application, and have been amended hereby. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 9-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,677,295 (“*Schultz*”), U.S. Patent No. 2,832,561 (“*Holl*”), or U.S. Patent No. 2,319,733 (“*Hall*”); Claims 1, 3, and 5-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as being obvious over *Schultz* in view of either U.S. Patent No. 6,694,749 (“*Heron*”) or U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0066276 (“*Kawano*”); Claims 1, 3, and 5-8 were also rejected as being obvious over *Holl* in view of either *Heron* or *Kawano*; Claims 1, 3, and 5-8 were further rejected as being obvious over *Hall* in view of either *Heron* or *Kawano*; Claims 5 and 6 were rejected as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,925,464 (“*Rabenau*”) in view of *Heron* or *Kawano*; and Claims 1-8 were rejected as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,315,963 (“*Warf*”) in view of *Heron* or *Kawano*.

Applicants respectfully traverse the aforementioned rejections for the following reasons.

It is respectfully submitted that none of the cited references teach or suggest that the thrust bearing is a thrust ball bearing, and that the thrust ball bearing is arranged between the valve disc and the valve seat, as recited in amended independent Claims 1, 5, 9, 11, and 12.

The presently claimed valve configuration has the advantage that all forces between the valve disc and the valve seat are carried by the thrust ball bearing, while the cited references, because of their different configurations, have only a partial transfer of forces. Further, in contrast to the cited references, the presently claimed valve configuration results in no contact between the face of the valve disc and the face of the valve seat, resulting in a “wearless valve.”

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent Claims 1, 5, 9, 11, and 12, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentably distinct over the cited references, alone or in any possible combination, if any.

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth above, this application is believed to be in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1290.

Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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